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UNCLAS BUCHAREST 001031

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DECLARATION OF DISASTER - ROMANIA

1. SUMMARY: In response to heavy damage caused by recent storms and floods, the Embassy hereby declares that a state of disaster exists in seven counties located mainly in the West and South-Western parts of Romania and requests \$50,000 to be provided to assist in the relief effort. END SUMMARY

2. During April 21-24, 2005, heavy rains and floods struck seven counties in Romania. The Ministry of Environment and Water Management reported that floods damaged more than 3,700 houses in 175 communities and destroyed about 43,000 hectares of crops. Also, 339 bridges were destroyed and 340 kilometers of county roads became inaccessible. As a result, many areas are left without potable water and electricity. Roads and railroads are also flooded, especially near the border with Serbia-Montenegro. One person lost her life and 3,350 were evacuated from their homes.

3. The storms have imposed an excessive burden on the Government of Romania (GOR) and we anticipate that the disaster will have a significant negative impact on the economy of the devastated counties. The most severely affected counties are Arad, Bihor, Caras-Severin, Hunedoara, Mehedinti, Suceava, and Timis. A preliminary estimate of the losses ranges from ROL 500 billion to 700 billion (USD 18 - 25 million). In Timis, the most affected county, the state of alert was declared yesterday.

4. The GOR is providing food, water, sleeping bags, tents, and medicines in the affected communities, but the basic requirements are far beyond the capacity of the local emergency services. The GOR's ability to meet most immediate needs is extremely limited. USG funding is requested to help to compensate by providing urgently needed assistance, especially to those families whose dwellings have been totally destroyed and who are now evacuated from their homes.

5. Ms. Lucia Ana Varga, Secretary of State, Ministry of Environment and Water Management, has written to the USAID Director requesting emergency disaster assistance for the people living in the worst affected areas.

6. I, therefore, declare that a state of disaster exists in the Arad, Bihor, Caras-Severin, Hunedoara, Mehedinti, Suceava, and Timis counties which are affected by the heavy rains and floods.

7. For OFDA: Embassy requests \$50,000 be allotted telegraphically to USAID, as authorized in OFDA Disaster Assistance Guidance, to initiate an intervention in support of the victims affected by floods. Please direct fund citation to RSC/RFM0 Budapest and USAID/Romania.

8. USG assistance will be focused primarily in the Foeni and Otelec communes, located in Timis county. Commodities will also be supplied to other severely affected communities of Timis and Caras-Severin counties. We anticipate that around 1,250 people will receive direct assistance.

9. We plan to use the USAID funds to procure emergency relief commodities consisting of water, personal hygiene kits, food supplies, well water purification kits, and portable gas stoves. The assistance will be coordinated with county authorities.

10. Our plan is to procure the services of World Vision to provide the emergency assistance. World Vision has successfully implemented similar humanitarian assistance for USAID/Romania during the past three years.

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